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DEPT FOR AF/E
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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI: NEW PRIME MINISTER NAMED

REF: DJIBOUTI 00265

1. PRESIDENT ISMAIL OMAR GUELLEH ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 4 THE APPOINTMENT OF DILEITA MOHAMED DILEITA AS PRIME MINISTER. DILEITA IS AN AFAR, AND IS PRESENTLY DJIBOUTIAN AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA. THE PREVIOUS PRIME MINISTER, BARKAT GOURAD HAMADOU, RESIGNED FEBRUARY 6 BECAUSE OF POOR HEALTH, REF A. SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1977 THE PRESIDENT HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN AN ISSA AND THE PRIME MINISTER AN AFAR. THERE IS SPECULATION, INCLUDING BY THE GOVERNMENT NEWS AGENCY, THAT DILEITA'S APPOINTMENT IS THE BEGINNING OF A CABINET RESHUFFLE. THE POSITION OF PRIME MINISTER IS LARGELY CEREMONIAL, WIELDING LITTLE POWER.

2. THE APPOINTMENT IS AN INTERESTING COMPROMISE, BECAUSE DILEITA IS NOT A PARTY MEMBER OF EITHER THE RULING RPP, OR THE OPPOSITION FRUD. HE IS KNOWN TO BE CLOSE TO THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER. MOST PEOPLE HAD PREDICTED THAT ONE OF THE PROMINENT AFARS IN THE RPP WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE CABINET WOULD GET THE NOD, SUCH AS ALI GUELLEH ABOUBAKER, PRESIDENTIAL CHIEF OF STAFF; MOHAMED DINI FARAH, MINISTER OF HEALTH; OR ALI MOHAMED DAOUD, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE.

3. DILEITA MOHAMED DILEITA WAS BORN MARCH 12, 1958 IN TADJOURAH, DJIBOUTI TO AN INFLUENTIAL FAMILY. HE WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL IN CAIRO, EGYPT AND RHEIMS, FRANCE, AND RECEIVED A DEGREE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS FROM A COLLEGE IN MEDEA, ALGERIA IN 1981. THE NEXT YEAR HE BEGAN A DIPLOMATIC CAREER IN THE DJIBOUTIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY. BY 1985 HE HAD THE RANK OF EMBASSY COUNSELOR, BUT REMAINED IN DJIBOUTI. IN 1986 HE TRAINED IN THE FRENCH MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT. IN 1988 HE BECAME DEPUTY HEAD OF PROTOCOL IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE. IN 1993 HE BECAME COUNSELOR FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS AT THE DJIBOUTAN EMBASSY IN PARIS, WHERE HE REMAINED UNTIL BEING APPOINTED AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA IN 1996. HE IS DIVORCED WITH ONE CHILD.

4. BARKAT, AGE 70, HAD BEEN PRIME MINISTER FOR 22 YEARS. FOLLOWING A STROKE MARCH 11, 2000, HE SPENT SIX MONTHS IN A PARIS HOSPITAL. HE RETURNED TO DJIBOUTI OCTOBER 2, PARTLY PARALYZED. MANY PEOPLE HAD THOUGHT THAT BARKAT'S LEAVING THE JOB WAS AN OPENING FOR PROGRESS IN THE POWER-SHARING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE FRUD. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ARMED WING OF THE FRUD SIGNED A PEACE ACCORD FEBRUARY 7, 2000 THAT ENDED SIX YEARS OF OCCASIONALLY VIOLENT CLASHES, AND HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING EVER SINCE. THE ARMED WING OF THE FRUD IS LED BY AHMED DINI AHMED WHO SERVED BRIEFLY AS PRIME MINISTER JUST AFTER INDEPENDENCE. THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT BEEN GOING WELL LATELY, AND IT WAS THOUGHT THAT THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP MIGHT BE A BARGAINING CHIP WITH THE FRUD.

5. THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN SPENDING A LOT OF TIME OUT OF THE COUNTRY RECENTLY. HE HAS BEEN BACK IN DJIBOUTI FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS FOLLOWING TRIPS TO KHARTOUM AND ASMARA, AND HE LEAVES FOR BEIJING IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. THE PRESIDENT DECIDED NOT TO ATTEND THE AFRICAN SUMMIT ON AFRICAN UNION IN SIRTE, LIBYA,

APPARENTLY PREFERRING TO WORK ON DOMESTIC POLITICS.
BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER'S JOB IS LARGELY
CEREMONIAL, IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT
MISS THE SIRTE CONFERENCE JUST TO SELECT SOMEONE FOR
THIS ONE POSITION, AND MORE CABINET CHANGES WILL BE
MADE SOON. HOWEVER, PREDICTING WHOLESALE CABINET
CHANGES HAS BEEN POPULAR SPORT EVER SINCE ISMAIL OMAR
GUELLEH CAME TO POWER IN APRIL 1999, YET THE ONLY
CHANGE HE HAS MADE SO FAR IS TO NAME A NEW PRIME
MINISTER.

YAMAMOTO